

5-1. HOUSING TRENDS

The total number of housing units in Newmarket has increased significantly over the last three decades. From 1970 to 1980, 630 units were added, representing a 58.7% increase. From 1980 to 1990, 1426 units were added, representing an increase of 76.7%. From 1990 to 2000, 350 units were added.

From 1990 to 2000, a total of 350 building permits were issued, as shown in Table 5.1. Most of the units added during the 1990's have been single-family detached units. A majority (257) of those permits were issued between 1995 and 1999, at an average annual rate during that period of 64 permits per year (2.16 % growth rate). Table 5.2 shows the percentage and the type of housing stock in Newmarket. Newmarket has traditionally had an almost even ratio of single-family and multi-family housing units. In the 1980's, the proportion of multi-family units, on average, increased to make up over half of the housing stock. In Rockingham County, multi-family units comprise about 30% of total housing units. While the number of single housing family units grew, census data for the year 2000 shows that single family units represented only 42% of the total housing units in Newmarket. In 1980 they constituted about 50%. Table 5.3 compares Newmarket housing type to the surrounding area.

TABLE 5.1 NEW HOUSING 1990-2000, NEWMARKET

	Single Family	Multi Family	Manufactured
1990 Census Count	1,199	1,852	198
1990	28	3	3
1991	5	0	0
1992	13	0	1
1993	10	1	3
1994	24	0	2
1995	35	2	6
1996	22	0	6
1997	50	1	0
1998	65	2	0
1999	62	1	5
Total Change	314	10	26
Total Units 1999	1,513	1,862	224

Source: US Census 1990, NH OSP and Newmarket Building Permits

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TABLE 5.2 HOUSING STOCK BY TYPE OF DWELLING NEWMARKET 1970-2000

Year	Single Family		Multi-Family		Mobile Homes	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
1970	541	46%	547	47%	76	6%
1980	937	50%	780	42%	135	7%
1990	1,199	36%	1,852	56%	198	6%
1999	1,513	42%	1,862	52%	224	6%

Source: US Census 1970-1990, Newmarket Building Permits

TABLE 5.3 HOUSING STOCK IN THE NEWMARKET AREA

Town	Single Family detached	Mobile Homes	All Other Types**
Durham	60%	0%	40%
Lee	64%	13%	23%
Epping	43%	12%	45%
Newfields	82%	3%	15%
Newmarket	36%	6%	58%
Rockingham County	63%	6%	49%
New Hampshire	59%	7%	34%

Source: US Census 1990

*** All other types includes single family attached, duplex, multi-family and other*

Table 5.4 shows the percentage of renters and owners of occupied housing units in Newmarket, Strafford and Rockingham Counties. Newmarket has a much higher percentage of renters than both counties, playing the role of a regional provider of rental housing. This was also true in 1980 and 1990.

**TABLE 5.4 STATUS OF HOUSING OCCUPANTS IN
NEWMARKET, COMPARED TO STRAFFORD AND ROCKINGHAM COUNTIES**

2000	Newmarket		Strafford County		Rockingham County	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Owner Occupied	1,779	53%	27,458	64%	78,992	76%
Renter Occupied	1,600	47%	15,123	36%	25,537	24%
Total Occupied Units	3,379		42,581		104,529	
1990	Newmarket		Strafford County		Rockingham County	
	Number	Percent	Number		Number	Percent
Owner Occupied	1,493	52%	24,453	65%	64,324	72%
Renter Occupied	1,405	48%	13,291	35%	24,794	28%
Total Occupied Units	2,898		37,744		89,118	

Source: US Census 1990, 2000

The value of owner-occupied housing has risen dramatically in Newmarket since the 1980 census. In 1980, the median value of a single-family home was \$46,000. In the 1990 census the value was \$131,500. The average monthly rental cost in 1999 for a two-bedroom rental unit ranged from approximately \$650 to \$1100 per month, depending on location, utilities and amenities provided.

The median year that housing stock in Newmarket was built is 1977. This is higher than the state average and that of Strafford and Rockingham County. A large proportion (42%) of Newmarket's housing units were built in the 1980's. Newmarket also has a substantial number of housing units built prior to 1939. These older units comprise 23% of Newmarket's total housing stock, the second largest housing age group.

Almost 95% of the pre-1939 housing units are located in the downtown area. This reflects the historic development pattern of the Town around the Newmarket Manufacturing Company on the Lamprey River. The average age of structures in the Village district is in excess of 100 years. Residential construction is predominantly wood framed, characterized by antiquated heating and plumbing facilities and inadequate insulation. A significant percentage of these structures contain residues of lead based paints and are poorly suited to meet other modern code specifications for fire detection and escape, electrical wiring and energy efficiency".¹ Over the last two decades, many of these structures have been substantially upgraded with improved heating, plumbing and fire detection systems.

¹Newmarket Community Development Block Grant Application, Small Cities Program, September 1970.

Vacancy Rates

One of the indicators of the *health* of a housing market is the vacancy rate. If the vacancy rate is too low there may not be enough units to accommodate the needs of the population. A *tight* housing market will also tend to drive up the cost of housing. Conversely, a high vacancy rate may be indicative of a high percentage of substandard housing or a struggling local/regional economy.

Opinions vary as to what constitutes an acceptable vacancy rate, but general standards normally applied are approximately 5% for rental housing and 2% for owner occupied housing. Currently, housing is in short supply in Newmarket, as well as throughout the entire region, with a rental vacancy rate of about 1% with owner-occupied residential housing remaining on the market for only a very short period of time.

Assisted Housing

The Great Hill Terrace is a public housing facility containing 50 subsidized dwelling units that are administered by the Authority. The other facility in town is called Newmarket House, which contains 27 dwelling units reserved for elderly and handicapped residents. The turnover rate for units in these facilities is very slow with only a few units becoming available during the course of a year. Both housing facilities typically have a waiting period of several months to a year.

The other type of assisted housing in Newmarket is Section 8 Existing Housing Vouchers. Administered by the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority (NHHFA), this program provides rental subsidies to tenants in apartments, which are currently part of the Town's housing stock

While the quantity of available housing units in a town is important, the quality of that housing is equally important. Housing quality is determined by many conditions, among them age, size, availability of modern facilities and adequacy of maintenance. Unfortunately, the U.S. Census does not attempt to quantify housing deficiencies in any great detail. This is primarily due to the fact that a variety of standards exist as to what constitutes a substandard dwelling unit. However, two data items are enumerated (availability of plumbing and overcrowding) which are used to identify substandard housing.

In terms of units lacking complete plumbing for exclusive use, the percentage of homes with this deficiency dropped from 2.0% in 1980 to .1% in 1990. Overcrowded housing (defined by the Census as having more than 1.01 persons per room) also declined. In 1980, 3.5% of the population lived in overcrowded housing units. By 1990, this figure had declined to 1.7%. Both of these areas indicate that, for the Town as a whole, housing conditions improved between 1980 and 1990.

Perhaps the best source of information regarding existing housing conditions is the information that the Town collects through surveys, inspections and building permits. In this way the Town has direct access to the information and some degree of continuity can be achieved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Newmarket has experienced growth in its housing stock at a greater rate than both Rockingham County and the State of New Hampshire in the 1970s and 1980s. Additionally, the types of units which comprise Newmarket's housing stock has shifted away from the predominant patterns of the surrounding communities, the County and the State, as shown in the text in Table 5.3.

Cherry Hill Apartments, located off of Bennett Way.



Newmarket has seen a recent increase in the number of single-family detached residential units, but still has a far lower proportion of that type than surrounding towns. This offset is caused by a disproportionately high rate of duplex and multi-family units.

As residential growth continues over time, the Town is interested in changing the composition of its housing stock to more closely reflect the mix of the surrounding communities, the County and the State. There are two primary reasons for this policy. The community is concerned about controlling property taxes (see Community Survey in Appendix A) and broadening its tax base. To broaden its tax base, the Town must slow residential growth, encourage sensible non-residential growth, and increase the value of its residential tax base. With the possible exception of elderly housing or retired communities, the Town should discourage additional multi-family complexes so that the Town's mix of housing is more similar to the regional distribution, with about 60% single family detached units. Single-family units typically will provide more property tax revenues per unit than duplex or multi-family units and demand less in community services. The Town needs to encourage housing growth so that the Town's mix of housing shifts to a more normal pattern, with about 60% single family detached units, since these units will provide more property tax revenues per unit than duplex or multi-family units and demand less in community services.

Much of the new housing will occur in the outlying areas of the community. These areas are intended to retain the relatively rural atmosphere that currently exists. The intention, therefore, is to require that outlying growth occur predominantly as single-family detached units while preserving large tracts of land as open space. Patterns of new developments should permit clustering or other alternative designs to accommodate low overall density while retaining contiguous tracts of open space and preserve viewsheds of undeveloped areas. The Piscassic River will soon likely be used to augment the Town's water supply (See previous Public Water Supply section in Chapter 1). A large portion of the undeveloped land along Grant Road and Ash Swamp Road are within the lower Piscassic River watershed. The Town should consider additional setback requirements and possibly density restrictions

for future development within this watershed to prevent further degradation of the water supply related to runoff and septic system leachate (See Chapter 1 for further discussion). Other specific recommendations with respect to housing include the following:

- Address the high number of multi-family units in Newmarket through ordinances and regulations that limit additional multi-family development and bring the distribution of housing types back into the regional and state norms. Particular focus should be on the trend toward conversion of older, large single and duplex units into multi-unit apartments which increase the density and also increase impacts on town services and parking requirements, causing congestion in the village area while not proportionately contributing to the tax base. This approach should reflect the historic pattern of the downtown area, however, where densely populated areas should and always have been found. This is particularly true where the Town seeks to encourage the development of a vibrant downtown, which requires a sufficient population base.
- Develop and enforce regulations and ordinances that seek to preserve and enhance the historic and cultural nature of the Town. This preservation effort should be especially strong in the Mill/Village District, which is a distinct and valuable resource to the uniqueness of Newmarket. This should be considered in support of the downtown Historic District Commission.
- Work with the Newmarket Community Development Corporation and their clients to ensure that any residential development in the mills be carefully planned in an attempt to avoid long-term negative impacts on the tax rate and mitigate increased demand on community services and infrastructure.
- Examine flexible road standards for subdivision roads and incorporate pedestrian and bicycle design standards where appropriate. Particular attention should be paid to alternative subdivision design, such as conservation subdivision development, where a low traffic count can justify reduced road widths and less impermeable surface to reduce the overall impact on open space and wetlands.